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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

October 29, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "COOKING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Animal Industry, U.S.D.A.

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More cooking questions come out of the mailbag today. The first question is about croquettes. It comes from a young housewife who writes: "My husband is very fond of meat croquettes. But whenever I try to make them they fall apart as soon as I drop them in the hot fat to fry. Can you explain why?"

May be that your croquette mixture is too soft and moist. Or maybe you don't let the croquettes stand long enough to dry on the surface after you have dipped them in egg and crumbs. Or perhaps you don't have the fat in the kettle hot enough. The fat should be heated to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. If you haven't a thermometer you can test the temperature by dropping an inch-cube of bread in. Fat hot enough for croquettes will brown that cube of bread in just 40 seconds.

You might like to hear the recipe for meat croquettes from the Bureau of Home Economics. (This recipe makes enough croquettes for 5 or 6 people. But you can cut it down to suit your family.) The directions say: To 1 pint of ground cooked meat or canned meat add 1 cup of mashed potatoes or boiled rice. Moisten slightly with gravy, milk or tomatoes. Season to taste with onion, parsley, salt and pepper. Mold the mixture into croquette shapes. Beat up an egg with 1 tablespoon of water. Dip the croquettes into the egg mixture, and then roll in finely sifted dry bread crumbs. Let the croquettes stand to dry the coating somewhat. Then place 2 or 3 croquettes at a time in a frying basket and lower slowly in fat that is heated to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Fry golden brown and drain on a sheet of paper afterwards.

Foods scientists at the Bureau of Home Economics say meat croquettes are one of the many quick hot dishes you can make with left-overs and canned meat. If you have some tidbits of cooked meat left in the refrigerator and some mashed potatoes or cooked rice, here's a way to put them together in a dish to please your husband or family. But remember it is very important to have the fat just the right temperature to fry them to a nice golden brown. And once again, the fat should be 350 degrees Fahrenheit, or hot enough to brown an inch cube of bread in 40 seconds.

That reminds me of the second question. Another young housewife asks: "How can you clarify fat after you have cooked doughnuts or French fried potatoes in it?"

Here's how to get that fat ready to use again. Pour it hot through a fine sieve to remove coarse particles of food. Let it cool. Then put it back with a couple of slices of raw potato in it. Let the fat continue to heat until the potatoes are brown. Then strain it through several thicknesses of clean cheese-cloth into a clean can. When the fat cools, cover the can tightly and keep it in the refrigerator until you are ready to use it the next time.

Now let's turn to a question about frozen meat. This letter says: "Please settle an argument for me. Does freezing make meat more tender or not?"

Meat scientists at the U. S. Department of Agriculture in recent tests found that freezing made steak more tender. You may be interested to know also that steaks frozen at 10 below zero were more tender than those frozen at 20 degrees above zero. But steaks frozen at a lower temperature than 10 below were no more tender than those frozen at 10 below. So the meat scientists report that freezing does make meat more tender. And they suggest 10 below as the most economical and practical freezing temperature for steaks.

Also in the mailbag this week come a couple of letters asking apple ques-

tions. One letter says: "Have you ever heard of combining apples and some vegetable to make a vegetable dish for cold-weather meals?"

Yes, the Bureau of Home Economics has worked out a number of recipes in which apples go into a vegetable dish. They suggest sliced apples and carrots fried together and served with pork or ham. They suggest sliced apples scalloped with shredded cabbage or with sweetpotatoes. And they suggest apples fried with onions.

Apples are an adaptable fruit. They fit in almost anywhere. If you want to see how many good dishes apples will make, send a postcard to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a green leaflet called "Apple Recipes." As long as the supply lasts the leaflet is free.

Last question: A housewife writes: "I often try to cook apples whole on top of the stove, but they always go to pieces during the cooking. Can you tell me how to prevent this?"

Use firm solid tart apples. Tart apples like Winesaps or York Imperials hold their shape better than sweet ones. Cook the apples in rather thick sirup and cook them very gently. Leave the skin on the apple but remove the core. Make a sirup of equal parts sugar and water with a few grains of salt. Set the apples into this hot thick sirup, cover and cook slowly until the apple is tender. Some apples take only 5 or 10 minutes to cook this way. Chill and serve with cream, or garnished with mint jelly, grated coconut or chopped nuts.

That's all the cooking questions for today. More questions will be up for answers on Thursday.

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